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ABSTRACT

These two volumes examine how the public sector can help revitalize southern rural counties adversely affected by global competition and technological advances. The first volume examines public and private factors that influence investment decisions in new technologies and outcomes of those decisions; effects of automation on employment and the workplace; effects on workers and employment; associated changes in organization and management philosophy; the role of education; and broader impacts on communities. Volume 2 is a collection of eight case studies. Most investments in automation are made incrementally to perform specific functions and address particular business objectives. Domestic competition and availability of new technologies are the two most common reasons for automating. Automation investments for these companies have increased capacity, output, productivity, and profitability. New technologies require more skills and flexibility, but provide for greater worker participation and autonomy. Automation is associated with higher-order thinking, more education, and more autonomy and responsibility for workers. Investments in new technologies typically lead to increases in total employment. Firms automating expect vocational education to provide sound basic skills and an ability to learn, not equipment-specific skills. Strategies for public sector intervention are suggested for outreach and information, education and training, and new industrial relationships. (DHP)